

Steal This Hook!

Ravaging Monsters

By Robert Wiese



It seems sometimes that the natural purpose of **D&D** characters is to fight monsters; and this month, with [Monster Manual V](#) out, it's natural to turn our eyes toward more fights. So, let's do that, but not stop there. Use the hooks presented below to draw your players (and characters) beyond the fighting and into a more complex adventure. I give you the fight, or the excuse to get the PCs into the neighborhood, and the rest is up to you.

I love feedback. If you use the ideas in this column, email me at robwiese8@yahoo.com and tell me which ones and how they went. That helps me know what appeals and what doesn't, so that I can make more that are useful for you.

Keep Your Roots Away from Me -- *Greyhawk*

The arable land of Furyondy stretches for miles in every direction from where you stand, and though some of it has been torn up by war, the nation can still produce vast amounts of food. You are on the road from Littleberg, which you left yesterday, and are working your way northward toward Chendl on some business. The morning passes pleasantly on this sunny day, and as midday advances you anticipate reaching Chendl tomorrow. In the distance, maybe 100 feet away, you see some kind of a disturbance in the field, like something tearing up the ground from below. It moves toward you with surprising speed, and then a number of large roots launch themselves from under the topsoil at you.

The root creatures are burrow roots, a new creature from *Monster Manual V*. If you don't have this book, then you can replace the burrow roots with bulettes.



d100 Motivations

With an opening like this one, the PCs provide the motivation. However, as they investigate they find a number of people who want this problem solved and are genuine in their desires.

d100 Complications

00-40 The burrow roots are a new colony in the area that an evil druid planted to drive the farmers away and return the land to a wilder state.

41-75 The burrow roots were planted here by minions of Iuz, as a means of destabilizing the populace through fear. Hundreds of them are maturing in different "nests" within the region, and they will cause a mass panic if no one does anything. Finding the people (or whatever) behind them could be more difficult.

76-85 The burrow roots have broken free of whoever was controlling them and are now on a rampage of their own.

86-00 The roots have been around for months now, and several villages in the region are preparing to "root" them out and destroy them. However, the burrow roots are elusive and retreat before being destroyed. The frustration is increasing as farmers lose crops and livestock and cannot do anything about it.

Campaign Adaptation

Burrow roots could probably go anywhere. Using them this way is just one idea. They make good creatures that are controlled by some more powerful enemy.

Eberron: Anywhere in central Breland is a good place for this adventure. Placing it near a border allows you to tie them to some unresolved conflict from the Last War.

Forgotten Realms: Set this adventure in the Dalelands, somewhere where Zhentarim can be blamed for their presence. On the other hand, the Zhentarim don't have to be behind the infestation; drow are possible, and the Dales have a lot of enemies. They could even be tied to Sembian nobles or merchants.

Generic: This adventure goes in a rural area where some power, group, or person has a vested interest in terrorizing the populace. A small town nearby would help, or several villages. The mastermind should, ideally, be someone local.

Bring Back That Shepherd! -- *Forgotten Realms*

Tethyr is a beautiful country, with mountains and forests and rivers throughout. The greatest concentration of people is in the west near the sea, but Saradush and (newly) Riatavin are sizable communities in the east. The PCs are traveling north along the small road (seeing more and more use in recent years) from Saradush to Riatavin. Perhaps they recently sorted out the mess of "[The Three Hagsteekers](#)". Perhaps not. Whatever the reason, they find themselves on this small road. They have not seen anyone for a couple hours when they see, off to the east, a small





flying dragon about half a mile away. It appears to those with good Spot check results to be carrying a sheep in one claw, and something small in the other. Really good Listen check results at this range allow them to hear cries for help. The creature, a wyvern, flies close toward them so that they can determine that the creature is carrying a human as well as the sheep, before veering off toward the nearby Omlarandin Mountains.

This may not be enough to get them interested, but Riatavin is still more than a day's travel away. This region is plentiful with farms and ranches, any of which could provide a place to stay. From the people there, the PCs learn that wyverns are flying out of the Omlarandins and snatching up farmers and shepherds in the plains north of the Omlarandins and south of Riatavin. Normally the creatures come out only to grab sheep for their meals, and the people around the Omlarandins have become accustomed to a small loss of livestock. The taking of shepherds and farmers is new, and everyone knows that the wyverns don't hunt such small creatures as humans for food. Since the frequency of attacks is rising, the people are worried, and any offers of help would be gratefully received.

If they don't stop with anyone for the night, then the following day the road passes close to a large field of sheep. The sheep are about 600 feet away from the road, attended by three shepherds (a brother and two sisters). As the PCs pass, two wyverns streak down from the sky and make attacks at sheep and shepherd alike. Once one grabs one of the shepherds, it flies off without even taking a sheep. The second takes a sheep, and grabs one of the women that was defending the sheep, and then flies off. The surviving family member begs the PCs to help rescue his or her siblings.

Note: This adventure works equally well with blackwings (a new creature in *Monster Manual V*). Change the mind flayers to mind flayer necromancers, and you're good to go.

d100 Motivations

While the motivations on the villain end may be varied, all the people here are simple folk who really need help from flying monsters. No one is capable of harnessing wyverns and throwing them at his or her friends.

d100 Complications

00-40 A pack of wyverns that lives in the Omlarandins has been dominated by a group of mind flayers that reached the surface from the Underdark in the mountain range. They are using the wyverns to collect slaves and food, since wyvern brain is not nearly as good as humanoid brain.

41-65 One survivor of a wyvern attack is in a village just north of the mountains. This woman, Zeradu Eldmina, remembers very little of her experience other than being snatched by a wyvern and dropped in the mountains. She barely survived by crawling into a place of hiding and then making her way out of the mountains days later. What really happened was that mind flayers dominated her and modified her memory, and she is now a plant among the humans and delivers information to the mind flayers without remembering doing so.

66-90 The wyverns are working on their own. There is a half-fiend wyvern leading and organizing the creatures for some fiendish purpose.

91-00 The creatures making the attacks on humans are not wyverns at all, but some kind of shapechanged creatures. The PCs can slay wyverns to their hearts' content without solving the problem. They have to dig deeper.

Campaign Adaptation

You can probably work some wyverns into your campaign and, with them, this adventure idea. [Lords of Madness](#) would help with the mind flayers, assuming you go that route, and [Fiendish Codex I](#) and [Fiendish Codex II](#) would help if you decide on shapechanged fiends instead.

Eberron: Though Droaam no doubt has wyverns and mind flayers, it's kind of short on humanoids working farms. Try Karrnath instead, where this could be a welcome change from undead.

Generic: Takes some farms, add some wyverns and some mind flayers perhaps (for spice), stir well and heat until boiling, then simmer a few hours.

Greyhawk: The Theocracy of the Pale works, or perhaps the Duchy of Tenh with the wyverns coming from a forest nearby. Ahlissa, especially in the south, is also a good location.

That's a Big Bug -- Eberron

During the Last War, the nations of Khorvaire were using just about every kind of creature or ally they could (which is great for DMs since it allows you to tailor your campaign with new creatures as needed or desired). This was especially true of the last years of the war, when resources were running very low. And Cyre was the most desperate of nations. Situated in the middle, it was attacked on all sides throughout the Last War. The leaders of Cyre used both House Cannith devices and creatures from other planes. When the Day of Mourning came, these creatures were left behind to survive as best as they could.



Valenar is a land of warlike elves that continues to make raids on its neighbors (not the Mournland, but Karrnath and the Talenta Plains). But some elves engage in more peaceful lifestyles, and many small communities exist in the northern part of the country near the Blade Desert and the Mournland. The PCs are visiting one of the major cities of Valenar when they hear rumors of destruction in the north. The rumors are crazy and varied, running from "it's nothing" to "a whole village was destroyed by demon beetles!"

House Lyrandar has land in the northern part of the country, and a lesser member of this house named Zeradu sends a note to the PCs asking them to meet him at his favorite tavern. He explains that the rumors are probably nothing, but they talk of events that have happened very close to House Lyrandar land and the senior members of the house are concerned. He offers the PCs either gold or an exchange of services (depending on what will motivate them) to go north, see what is going on, and make sure that whatever it is doesn't affect House Lyrandar.

d100 Motivations

00-45 Zeradu hopes that his swift action in this "crisis" will bring him to the notice of senior house members and lead to a promotion. He hopes there is something horribly wrong, and that the PCs can take care of it so that he can claim credit for as much as possible.

46-75 Zeradu hates this assignment and wants out of this elf-infested country. He hopes that by solving this problem he can come to the notice of house officials elsewhere and get a transfer. His hatred of his current situation is poorly hidden in his attitude, and he would not mind at all if some elves died so that he could be transferred.

76-00 Zeradu is being manipulated into what someone thinks is a fool's errand. The manipulator knows of Zeradu's ambition (see first option) but thinks that there is nothing to the rumors. By taking a lot of effort over nothing, Zeradu can be made to look like a fool and a waster of house resources, and the manipulator can remove him from the house. Perhaps the two are vying for the same woman?

d100 Complications

00-75 There are destroyed villages and even a small town. Siege beetles (see *Monster Manual V*) from the plane of Shavarath were called into Cyre during the Last War, and they remain still. They have wandered over the border and through the Blade Desert looking for food, since they have cleaned out the corpses in the southern part of the Mournland. They are mindless but hungry vermin who avoid armed traveling groups but attack settlements.

76-90 Siege beetles are involved, but only two. Karrnathi war groups that are tired of the Valaes Tairn raids use them. They seek to lure a raiding group into a trap and are using the beetles to create havoc in the hope of tricking the elves into preparing for the wrong foes.

91-00 A demon prince of Shavarath sent the siege beetles to exact revenge on the elves because a group of Valaes Tairn invaded the demon prince's fortress and disrupted a major offensive against a devil lord's forces. The siege beetles might be half-fiends as well, and other demons may be waiting to tear apart vulnerable elven flesh. The PCs would simply be in the way of the demon prince's goal of obliterating Valenar a little at a time.

Campaign Adaptation

Because siege beetles appear near fields of carnage, or are used there by spellcasters, this adventure idea doesn't fit just anywhere. But, once you find a good spot for the beetles, all you need is your core books and *Monster Manual V* to run it.

Forgotten Realms: The area around the High Moor is very good for this adventure, since the High Moor is the blasted graveyard of the destroyed Miyeritar elven kingdom. Siege beetles could have come from Acheron to clean an area of the Moor so that someone else could establish a fortification.

Generic: The siege beetles should come from a battlefield area, preferably in the wilderness, because they eat corpses.

Greyhawk: Ancient battlefields are not plentiful, but you could set this adventure in the Shield Lands where they meet with the Lands of Iuz. A lot of battles take place there, and it would be natural for siege beetles to be called to the area.

About the Author

Robert Wiese has been playing **D&D** since 1978 after he watched a game played in the car on the way home from a Boy Scouts meeting. He was fascinated, and delved into this strange world of dragons and magic and sourcebooks. Years later, he was hired to edit tournaments for the **RPGA** Network, and from there progressed

to running the network after his boss was assassinated in the great Christmas purge of 1996. Times were tough, but he persevered and brought the **RPGA** into a shining new era. Eventually he met a girl who liked to play **D&D** too, and he left Renton for the warmth and casinos of Reno, Nevada. Now, he works in the Pharmacology department of UNR studying mouse foot muscles and the effects of RF emissions on same. He spends as much time as possible with his wife Rhonda and son Owen.

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